

In response, Applicant draws the Examiner's attention to the amendments to claim 55. Claim 55 has now been amended to state the "combined width of the extensions is less than the width of the base." Cody discloses a projection (14) having extensions (34) wherein the extensions are the same width as the base (34) - - in fact, the two elements referred to as "34" are the exact same element. The system of Cody wherein the combined width of the projection is equal to the width of the base would not work for the intended purpose of the claimed invention, *i.e.*, the provision of a laminate flooring surface connector. Consequently, it is respectfully submitted that claim 55, and claims 56-58 dependent thereon, are patentably distinct over Cody.

Claims 55-58 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by McCue *et al.* (U.S. Patent 4,808,451). In particular, allegedly McCue *et al.* teaches all the limitations of the above claims including an elongated track connector (10) with base with a projection (76) with identical right and left halves (166), and base has protrusions (86) and recesses (82) extending the length of the connector. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

In response, Applicant respectfully directs the Examiner's attention to the other amendment to claim 55, *i.e.*, "a projection extending vertically from said base for insertion into the edges of two panels to be connected." U.S. Patent No. 4,808,451 to McCue *et al.* is not directed to such a connector. Indeed, McCue *et al.* is directed to a "flush fitting protective strip assembly" and specifically, "to bumper strip assemblies for protecting furniture edges, wall and display case surfaces and the like," *i.e.*, it is not directed to a connector having a projection with right and left halves for insertion into edges of two panels to be connected. McCue *et al.* does not teach or suggest the connection of individual panels or solve the problem the current claimed invention solves. Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that Claims 55-58 are patentably distinct over McCue *et al.*.

CONCLUSION

As amended herein, Claims 55-58 are pending in the application. It is respectfully submitted that Claims 55-58 are patentable in view of the prior art. Therefore, applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of all pending claims.

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An extension of two (2) months is requested and a Notification of Extension of Time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 with the appropriate fee of \$410.00 is attached herewith.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendments. The attached pages are captioned "**Version with Markings to Show Changes Made.**"

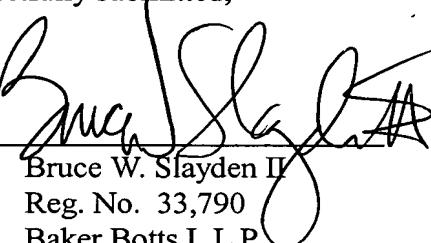
The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-0383 of Baker Botts L.L.P. If there are any matters concerning this application that may be cleared up in a telephone conversation, please contact Applicants' attorney at 512.322.2606.

DATE

1/28/03

Respectfully submitted,

BY



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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 55 and 58 as follows:

55. (twice amended) A disengageable connector for vertically and horizontally interconnecting two individual flooring panels with identical edges to form a permanent or temporary laminate flooring surface on top of a support structure, said connector comprising:

a base having a given width, said base having [and] a projection extending vertically from said base, said projection having top and bottom portions and consisting of identical right and left halves for insertion into the edges of two panels to be connected, the top portion of each half comprising identical extensions extending horizontally in opposite directions equal distances wherein the combined width of the extensions is less than the width of the base, said extensions being substantially parallel to, separate from and above said base, and [optionally,] two [additional] protrusions extending vertically from said base, said [two] protrusions spaced apart from said projection and being located on either side of said projection[, wherein the base further comprises two recesses formed therein located between the protrusions and the projection].

58. (twice amended) The connector of claim 55 [including protrusions] wherein the protrusions extend substantially the entire length of the connector.